

Recovering the Regenerate Church Membership

Part Two

1. Converted Church Members

2. Committed Church Members

Luke informs us that these new converts “were baptized.” New converts being baptized in Acts is a consistent pattern (Acts 8:12, 9:18, 10:47, 16:31-34). We call this mark of a regenerated church membership “Believers Baptism.” In none of these passages were unconverted infants baptized. Most denominations baptize the unconverted giving them a false sense of security. With such strong Scriptural evidence for “Believer’s Baptism” how did the church start allowing the unconverted to be baptized and therefore be members of the local church?

Church historians point back to Roman Emperor Constantine in 312 as the Fall of the Church. After his alleged conversion to Christianity Constantine made Christianity a legal religion. The state started supporting the church and eventually the church and state were no longer separate.

Every citizen of the state should be baptized to be a member of the church and all infants were baptized. For 1000 years during the Dark Ages church membership was mixed instead of regenerated. Even the Reformers did not correct this problem. It took the Anabaptist and the finally the Baptist to insist on separation of church and state and a converted church membership.

A. *Baptism is a believer’s public confession of Christ.* In Romans 10:9-10, Paul states that saving faith is followed by a public confession.

B. *Baptism is a believer’s commitment to discipleship in a local assembly.* Once these new converts in Acts 2 were baptized they immersed themselves into the life of their local church. They were simply obeying Jesus’ great commission found in Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus commanded the church to “Make disciples” by winning sinners to Christ, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things He taught.

- 1) Baptism is a commitment to the church’s “*teaching*” (2:42).
 - a) Jesus was called “teacher” 45 times and “rabbi” 14 times.
 - b) The new convert is now a “disciple” which means “learner.”
 - c) The new convert’s pastor is a “pastor/teacher.”
 - d) The Holy Spirit gifts other believers with the gift of teaching (Romans 12:7) such as Sunday School teachers, AWANA, and our Youth Ministries, and Ladies Ministries.

- 2) Baptism is a commitment to **“fellowship”** (2:42).
 - a) Our fellowship is modeled after the Trinity (John 17:24).
 - b) We fellowship because we are made in the image of God. After God created Adam, God said, “It is not good for man to be alone.”
 - c) For the first time in Acts 2 the word “fellowship” is used in the New Testament. Now that the Holy Spirit was given, believers can fellowship with one another. This was not true before Pentecost according to the prediction of Jesus in John 7:37-39.
 - d) The Holy Spirit makes us family (Romans 8:14-17).
 - e) Fellowship does not take place in a Sunday morning worship service. Vertical worship takes place which is very important. Horizontal fellowship takes place in small groups as these first church members enjoyed in Acts 2:46.

- 3) Baptism is a commitment to **worship** (2:42). Worship is when we corporately as a body give to God according to Psalm 29:1-2.
 - a) We worship in the observation of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus said, “This do in remembrance of me.” Worship is Christ centered not man centered.
 - b) We worship when preaching is Christ centered (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).
 - c) We worship when we participate in our church music which is Christ centered (Colossians 3:16).

- 4) Baptism is a commitment to **service** (2:44-46). The first church members gave to those in need which enabled the church to have great influence in the community. This is also seen in the next example provided by Luke in 4:32-37. Later, James the pastor of this church at Jerusalem would write James 3:14-18).

- 5) Baptism is a commitment to **evangelism** (2:42-47; 4:32-37). Evangelism was the result of a regenerated, committed church membership on the community. The community witnessed lives being changed as a result of a regenerated, committed church membership and were attracted.

The worship service was not a man centered evangelistic service, but evangelism resulted from the church learning, fellowshiping, worshiping God, and giving to others. The church services were not seeker sensitive but produced seek sensitive believers.